



# Three Business Districts & One Bikeway. . . . Getting Past COVID

Arlington Heights  
Bedford Center  
E. Lexington Village

June 8, 2021

**FinePoint**  
Associates

**dhcd**  
Massachusetts  
RAPID RECOVERY PLANS

# Welcome & Background

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# Speakers

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## Community Project Leaders



Lexington - Sandhya Iyer, Economic Development Office



Lexington - Casey Hagerty, Economic Development Office



Arlington - Ali Carter, Economic Development Coordinator



Bedford - Alyssa Sandoval, Economic Development Director



## Plan Facilitator Team



Peg Barringer, FinePoint Associates, Partner



Ted Brovitz, Brovitz Community Planning and Design



## Tech Assistance

Tuti Thapa, FinePoint Associates, CED Analysis

FinePoint Associates

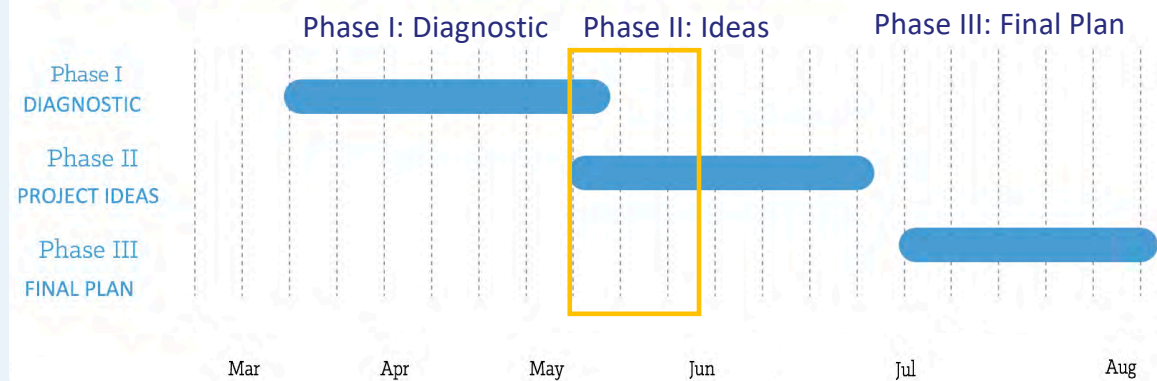
# Agenda

1. Welcome and Background
2. RRP Process and Community Engagement
3. Findings and Stakeholder Input Part 1:  
Public Realm, Private Realm, Accessibility and Zoning & Regulations
4. Findings and Stakeholder Input Part 2:  
Real Estate & Business Environment, Market Environment, District Management
5. Community Comment/Feedback
6. Next Steps & Wrap-up



# RRP Process & Community Engagement

## Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program



#### Targeted Districts:

- Arlington Heights
- Bedford Center
- East Lexington Village



Arlington, Bedford, Lexington,

#### Goals of the RRP Process

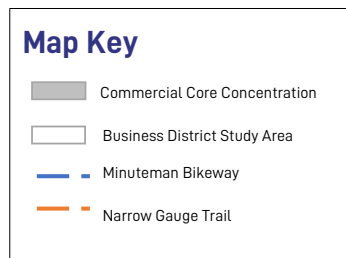
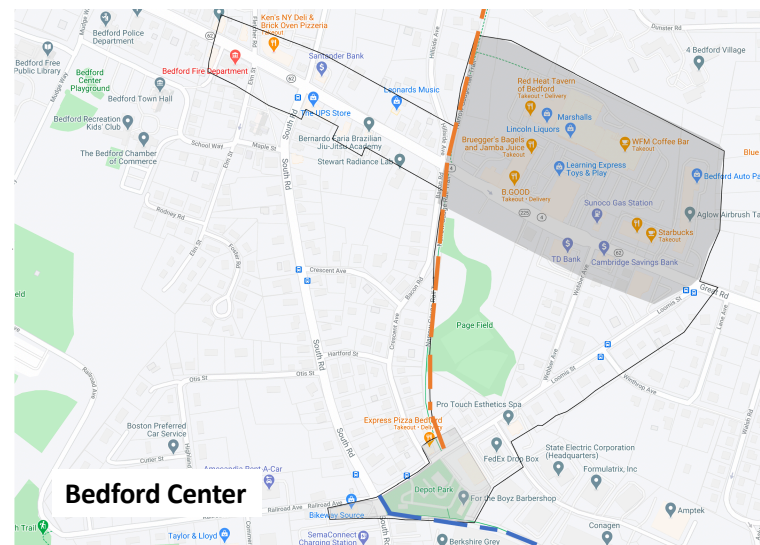
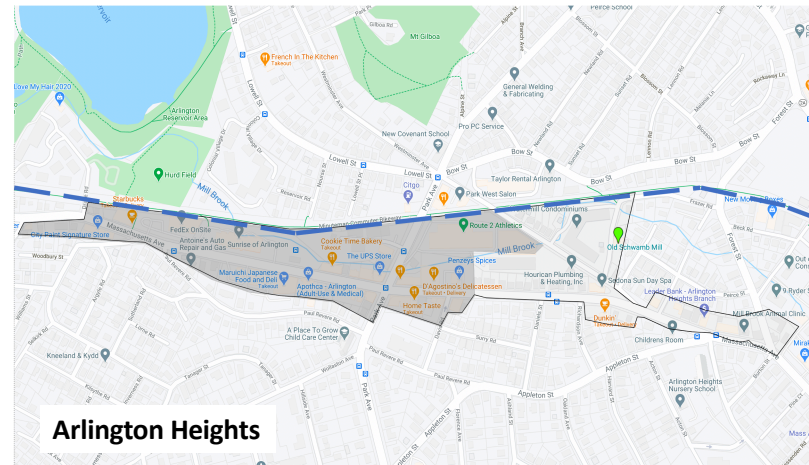
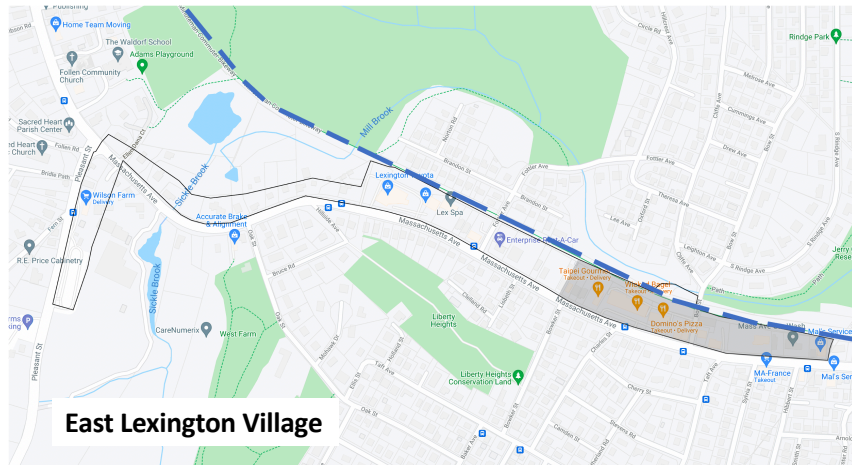
1. **Analyze conditions and opportunities** in the 3 targeted commercial districts with a particular focus on their common asset – proximity to the Minuteman Bikeway
2. **Create an data-driven action plan to assist the commercial districts recover from COVID**, be more vibrant than ever and expand their focus on the bikeway user consumer segment
3. Aim for collaboration and a level of consistency that will benefit the 3 communities and commercial districts

## Process and Community Engagement

- Data Collection & Analysis
- Walk About Tours with Community Leaders, Business Owners and Residents & Listening Session
- Business Survey
- Focus Group with Bikeway/Biking Organizations from each Community
- Case Study Research
- Interviews & Work Sessions with Community Project Leaders

Walk About Tour



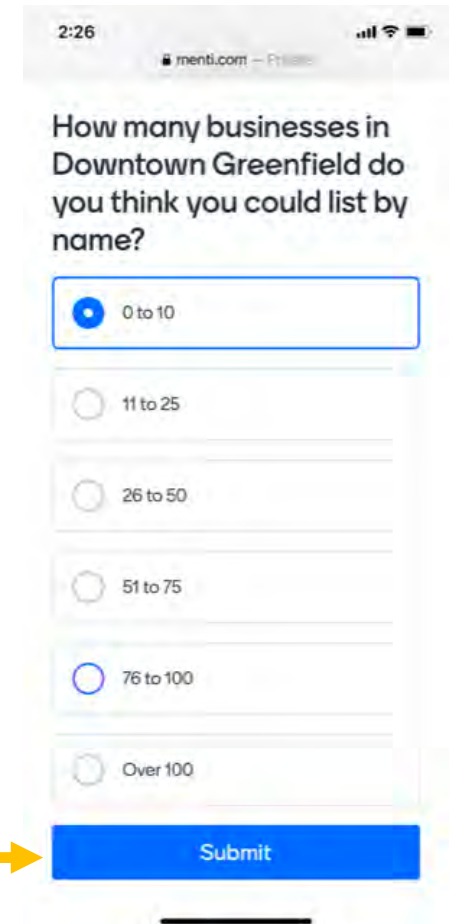


## Stakeholder Input

- Use a different device not using for Zoom like your smart phone (easiest way)

or open a new browser on your computer (different than the one using for this zoom meeting)

- Go to: **www.menti.com**
- Enter the Code you will see on the Zoom screen
- Then , you will be able to answer the questions we post on the screen.
- Make sure to scroll down to the bottom of each question and Hit the **Submit Button** for each Question







# Stakeholder Polling Question



## **Findings**

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# **Findings and Stakeholder Input**

## **Part 1:**

### **Public Realm, Private Realm, Accessibility and Zoning & Regulations**

## **Findings**

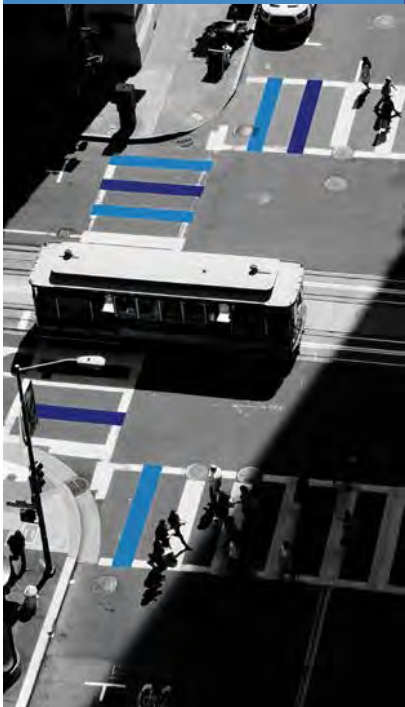
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# **Findings and Stakeholder Input Part 2:**

## **Real Estate & Business Environment, Market Environment and District Management Findings**



PHYSICAL  
ENVIRONMENT



# Public Realm

## The 3 districts have very different settings and development patterns.

### Key Finding

- **Arlington Heights** - Linear mixed use neighborhood center with a broad range of food, retail shops, and services
- **East Lexington** - Strip commercial corridor with auto-oriented commercial uses
- **Bedford** - A traditional New England village center with commercial, civic, and residential uses.
- **Minuteman Bikeway** - Proximate to each of the districts



## Streetscape treatments and business “spill-out” opportunities are limited.

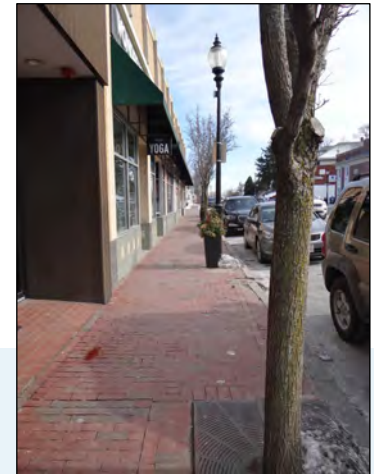
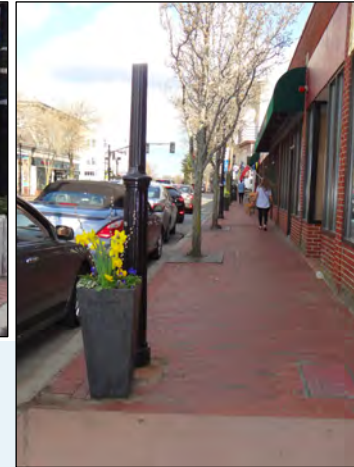
### Key Finding

- **Arlington Heights**

- Treatments such as brick pavers, ornamental lamp posts, raised planters, street trees, benches, and bike racks; Much of it is dated.
- Narrow sidewalks and placement of some planters, trees, and benches creates obstacles and limits opportunity for business spill-outs.

- **East Lexington** - Narrow sidewalks and very few streetscape treatments; Limited opportunities for adjacent businesses to utilize of space for café seating or displays; Parking overlaps onto the sidewalks.

- **Bedford Center** - Newer streetscape elements; position of planters and benches in historic center limits business spill-out.



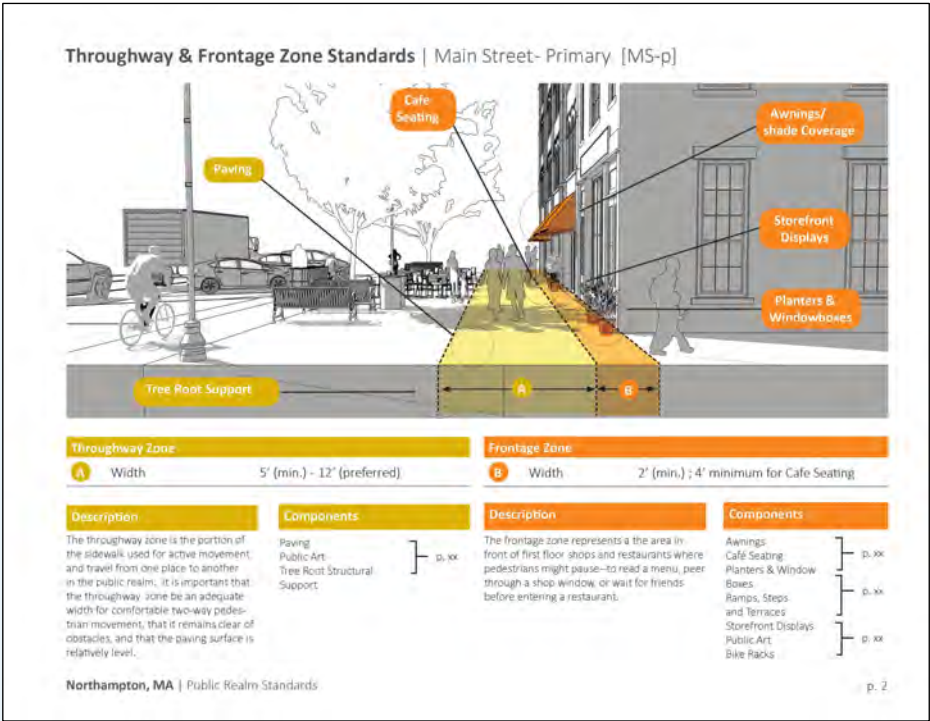


Streetscape treatments and business “spill-out” opportunities are limited.

Potential Opportunity



Sidewalk Zones



Public Realm and Outdoor Room Activation

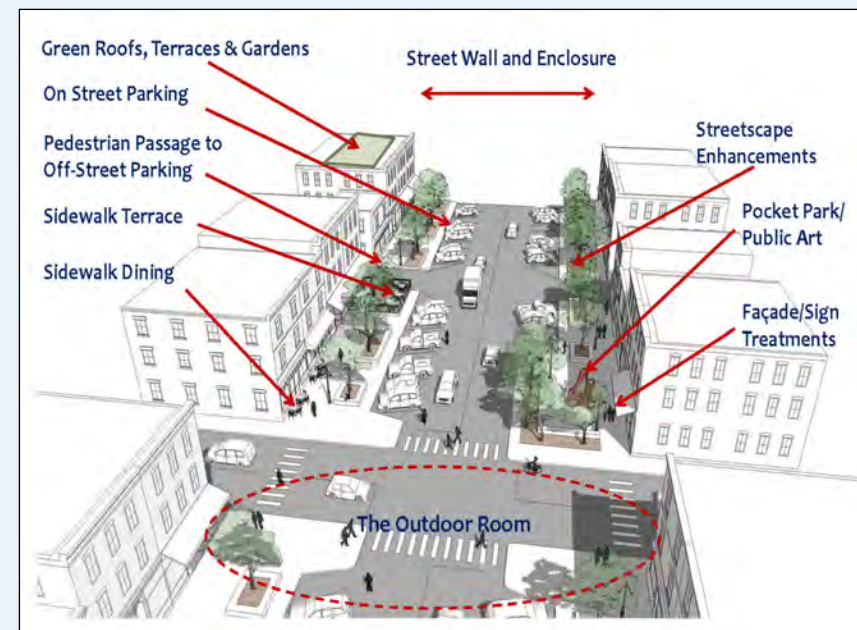


Streetscape treatments and business “spill-out” opportunities are limited.

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#### Potential Opportunity

- Calm Traffic – Slow down fast moving vehicles with streetscape treatment.
- Bike Amenities – Provide more bike racks & corrals.
- Coordinate Furnishings – Place elements to maximize efficiency and opportunity (benches, planters, tree pits, lamp posts, bike racks, bollards, etc.)
- Streets and Crosswalks -No striping in E Lexington, not clear that you can park on street and promotes higher speed. In Bedford, need crosswalk at second entrance to marketplace, Crosswalks need to be fixed in several areas.
- Sidewalks Activation – Allow for spill-outs such as café seating, merchandise displays, and sandwich board signs.



**Public Realm and Outdoor Room Activation**

## Bike facilities and amenities in the districts and on Bikeway are limited.

### Key Finding

- **Bikeway** - Bike racks, bike corrals, and repair stations on the Bikeway and in the 3 districts is limited and inconsistent.
- **Arlington Heights** - Some U-shaped bike racks on the sidewalks and at a few businesses
- **East Lexington** - No bike racks were observed; and a Zagster Bike Share station was removed last year from Berman's Wine & Spirits along the Bikeway for lack of use.
- **Bedford Center** - Limited bike racks at Depot Park, Bedford Center, or Bedford Marketplace.





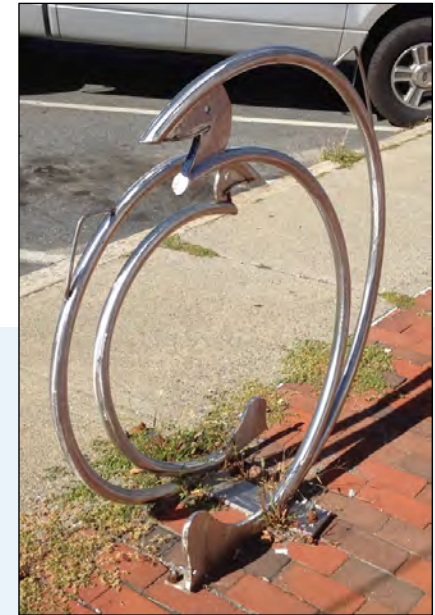
## Bike facilities and amenities in the districts and on Bikeway are limited.

### Potential Opportunity

- **Storage** - Add more bike racks, bike corrals, and repair stations on the Bikeway and in the 3 districts
- **Placement** - Position sidewalk bike racks where demand is high and minimize obstacle to other uses.
- **Bike Share** - Flexible bike share on the Bikeway and in the 3 districts (possibly dockless)
- **Public Art** - Blend with bike facilities



Bike Corrals



Bike Racks



Bike Lanes and Sharrows

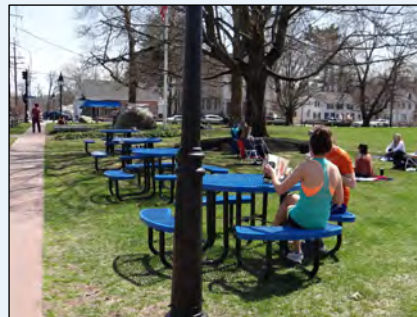


Bike Shares

Arlington Heights and East Lexington are missing a centrally located, visible, and public open space with programming.

#### Key Finding

- **Arlington Heights** - Does not have a centrally located public space.
- **E. Lexington** - has a park space off the Bikeway with no amenities or programming.
- **Opportunity** - A visible and centrally located space in Arlington Heights and Lexington hosting regular civic events could draw travelers along Mass Ave., Bikeway users, as well as residents and workers.





Arlington Heights and East Lexington are missing a centrally located, visible, and public open space with programming.

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#### Potential Opportunity

- **Lexington** - Bow Street Park
- **Arlington** - MBTA Busway, underutilized private property
- **Bedford** - More events on the Common, and civic use of the Veterans Building at Depot Park



## Public wayfinding is limited.

### Key Finding.

- No coordinated public wayfinding systems leading people to and around the district from the Bikeway or area streets.
- Significant economic opportunity to capture dollars from Bikeway users and other visitors with a well design wayfinding.





## Public wayfinding is limited.

### Potential Opportunity

- High quality wayfinding elements could attract more customers and Bikeway users to shops, restaurants, civic venues and other points of interest. Wayfinding elements include:
  - Gateway signs
  - Directional signs
  - Community Information Kiosks
  - Business Directories and Maps
  - Locational and Interpretive Signs
  - Banners (On Poles or Over Street)



Pedestrian-oriented, wayfinding signs, created by Walk Dover, promote walking around downtown by highlighting key area attractions and transit.



## Public art is limited in the 3 districts.

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### Key Finding

- Public art as part of the streetscape enhancements, public open spaces, and on private building can add vibrancy to the district and draw customers and Bikeway users

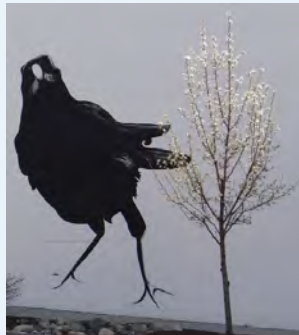




## Public art is limited in the 3 districts..

### Potential Opportunity

- Murals
- Sculpture
- Movable Furnishings
- Bike racks and corals
- Painted cross walks with different themes





## Public art is limited in the 3 districts..

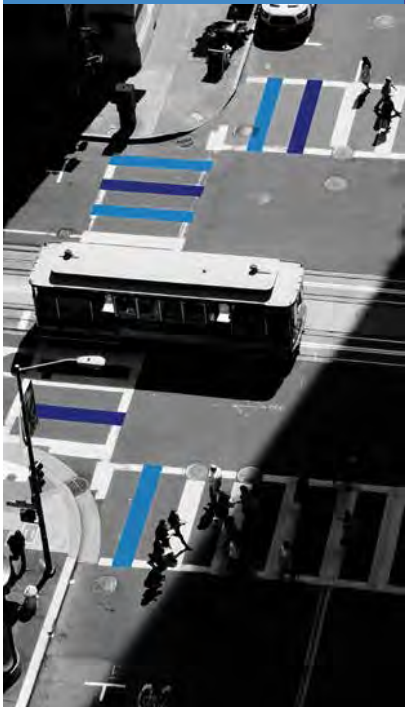
### Potential Opportunity

- **Curb Extensions** - with art in existing and new curb extensions (Avenue A in Turners Falls)
- **Public Street Art Wall** - Cambridge MA
- **Interpretive “Then and Now” Murals** - historical wayfinding sign on the sidewalks
- **Music Stations** - such as the xylophone bus stop in Sedona AZ or pianos in St. Armond's Circle, Sarasota)
- **Movable Furniture** – e.g. Adirondack chairs painted by local artists





PHYSICAL  
ENVIRONMENT

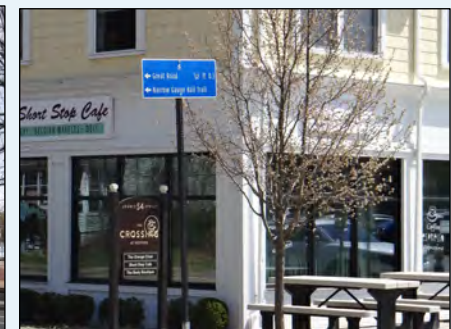


# Private Realm

## More storefront treatments are needed.

### Key Finding

- **Combination of Treatments** - Many businesses have 1 or 2 façade and spill-out elements but more combinations are possible.
- **Business Signage** - More focus on pedestrians is needed (i.e. projecting blade signs, awning signs, sandwich board signs)
- **Storefront Condition** - Many storefronts, signs, and displays are tired looking.
- **Façade Elements** - Awnings are limited, some in disrepair; Some businesses keep shades down or cover windows making businesses look closed
- **Limited Sidewalk Utilization** - Limited outdoor merchandise display or café seating
- **100% Corner is Critical** - The main intersection in the district is where first impressions are made.





## More storefront elements are needed.

### Potential Opportunity

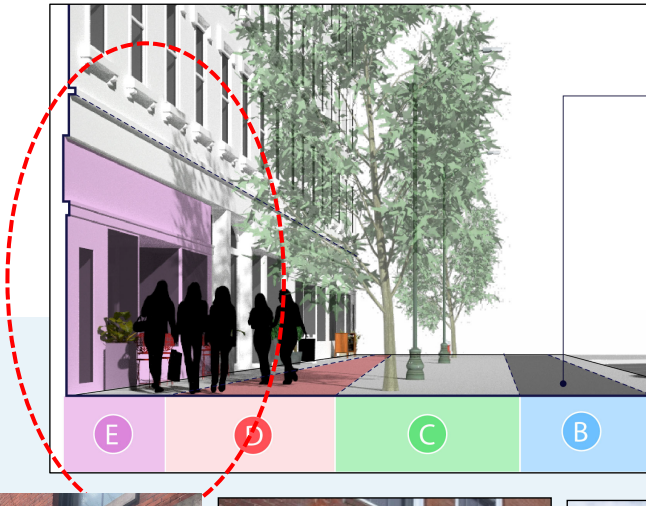
- **Make An Impression** - Businesses only have seconds to make an impression on potential customers walking by.
- **Use All the Tools** - Successful merchants use a variety of tools to draw in pedestrians and be visible to drivers.



## More storefront elements are needed.

### Potential Opportunity

- **Facades** - Multiple combinations of elements are employed such:
  - Wall signs
  - Projecting blade signs
  - Banners
  - Awnings
  - Murals (for blank walls)
  - Window signs and displays





## More storefront elements are needed.

### Potential Opportunity

- **Spill-Out Elements** – Using the sidewalk for a combined of treatments such as:
  - Café seating
  - Planters
  - Merchandise displays
  - Sandwich board signs





## Missed opportunities to attract Bikeway users to the districts.

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### Key Finding

- **Districts** – All have an opportunity to draw additional customers from the Bikeway commuters and recreational users.
- **Adjacent Businesses** – Those on the Bikeway have a unique opportunity to orient visually toward riders (i.e. signage, outdoor seating, etc.).
- **Connections** – Most businesses are not making a visual, physical, or marketing connection to the Bikeway.



## Missed opportunities to attract Bikeway users to the districts.

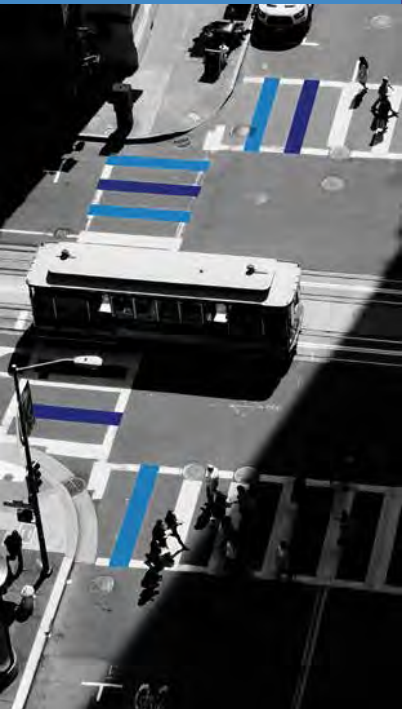
### Potential Opportunity

- **Wayfinding** - Provide coordinated and attractive wayfinding system.
- **Information** - Provide information along the Bikeway about the business districts (businesses and points of interest)
- **Bike Amenities** - Provide more along the Bikeway and in district (bike racks, bikeshares, corrals, repair stations)
- **Adjacent Business** - Provide direct access, signage, outdoor seating, etc.
- **Improve Difficult Access Points** - Bikeway access challenges (grade separation, crossing parking lots, etc.).





PHYSICAL  
ENVIRONMENT



# Accessibility



There is good multi-modal access in the districts but conditions vary and challenges exist.

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#### Key Finding

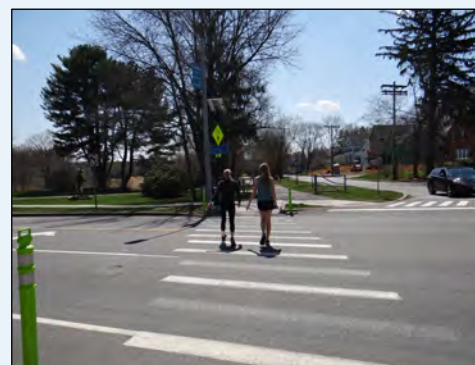
- **Auto and Bus Access** – All 3 districts are centered on major state roads providing good access by car and MBTA bus service.
- **Bike and Pedestrian Access** – Good sidewalk and bike trail networks.
- **Parking** - Collectively, public and private parking systems in the 3 districts create sufficient parking capacity to serve customers, workers, and residents in cars, buses, and bikes.



There is good multi-modal access in the districts but conditions vary and challenges exist.

#### Key Finding

- **Fast Moving Traffic** – Traffic calming is needed in some areas.
- **Bike Amenities Inconsistent** – Location and availability
- **Streetscape Obstacles** - Benches, planters need improvement in Arlington, some planters create obstacles and inconsistent, little inviting seating; streetscaping sparse in E Lexington
- **Streets and Crosswalks** – Restriping is needed on some of the crosswalks; parking and bike lane striping is needed in E. Lexington (leads to higher speed).
- **Bikeway Access Points** – Lack definition and wayfinding is limited directing to the districts.
- **Access to Adjacent Businesses Limited** – Informal with safety and accessibility issues

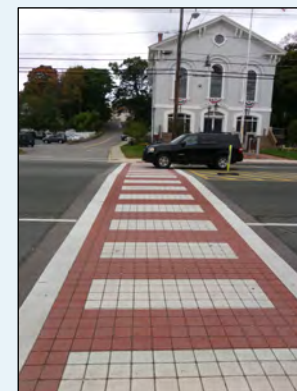
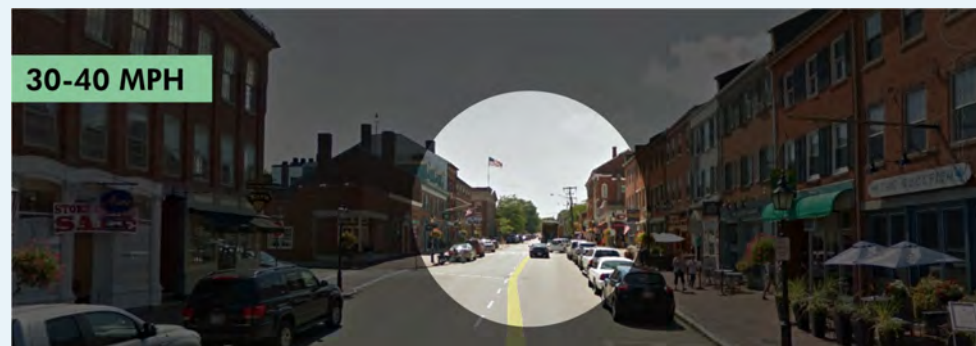




There is good multi-modal access in the districts but conditions vary and challenges exist.

#### Potential Opportunity

- **Traffic Calming** – The key for downtown traffic is slow and steady. (about 18 to 20 MPH) so drivers can see the businesses and pedestrian.
- **Expand Bike Amenities** - on the Bikeway and in the Districts
- **Streetscape Improvements** - Relocate or remove sidewalk obstacles as needed
- **Upgrade Crosswalks and Curb Extensions** – Restriping with consistent pattern and curb extensions to slow traffic.





There is good multi-modal access in the districts but conditions vary and challenges exist.

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#### Potential Opportunity

- **Improve Bikeway Access Points** – Lack definition and wayfinding is limited directing to the districts.
- **Orient Adjacent Businesses to Bikeway** – More access and activation along the Bikeway



**Business Orientation to the Erie Canal Towpath –  
A Multipurpose Path, Pittsford, NY**



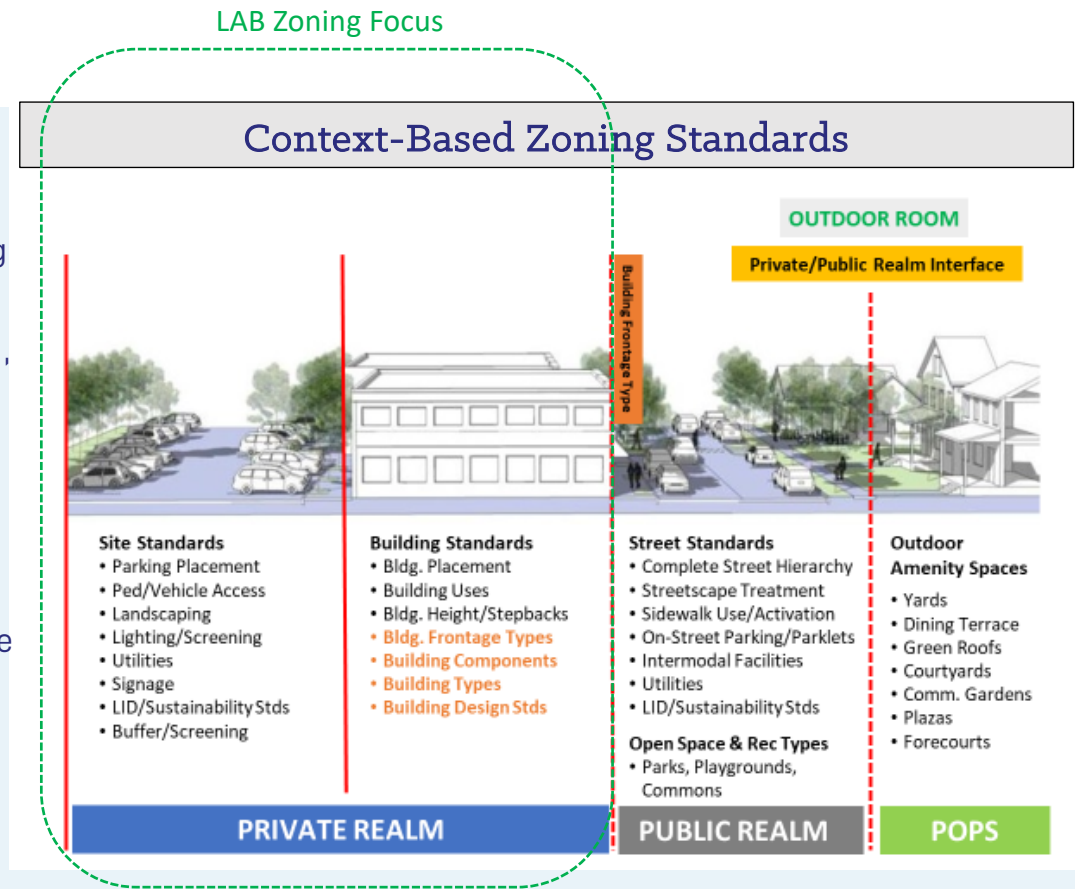
ADMIN  
CAPACITY

# Zoning & Regulations

## Current Zoning focuses Primarily on the “Private Realm”.

### Key Finding

- **Conventional Zoning Bylaws** - The 3 districts addresses “private realm” building and site improvements such as setbacks, uses, parking ratios, and open space landscape %.
- **Pedestrian-Oriented Districts** - In this setting, good urban design is critical, and zoning must also address the “public realm” to ensure a compatible relationship between the two.
- **Context-Based Design Standards** - Being adopted by municipalities to coordinate site planning, building uses, and façade treatments with complete streets, streetscape treatments, usable open spaces, and activation/spill outs





## Current Zoning focuses Primarily on the “Private Realm”.

### Potential Opportunity

- **Context-Based Zoning** - To ensure a cohesive and compatible interface between the public and private realms, context-based design standards are often adopted by municipalities to enhance the relationship:
  - Building placement, size, height, bulk
  - Mixed uses and ground floor commercial
  - Façade treatments and fenestration
  - Sidewalk activation (signs, displays, café seating)
  - Publicly-accessible open spaces
  - Location of off-street parking
  - Access and circulation



## Public Realm Design Standards and Guidelines.

### Potential Opportunity

- **Complete Streets Standards** – To enhance multi-mobility in a pedestrian oriented village or district:
  - Travel lanes, turning lanes, signals
  - Center medians
  - On street parking
  - Crosswalks/curb extensions
  - Bus pullouts and stops
  - Bike lanes
  - Other "Traffic Calming" applications.

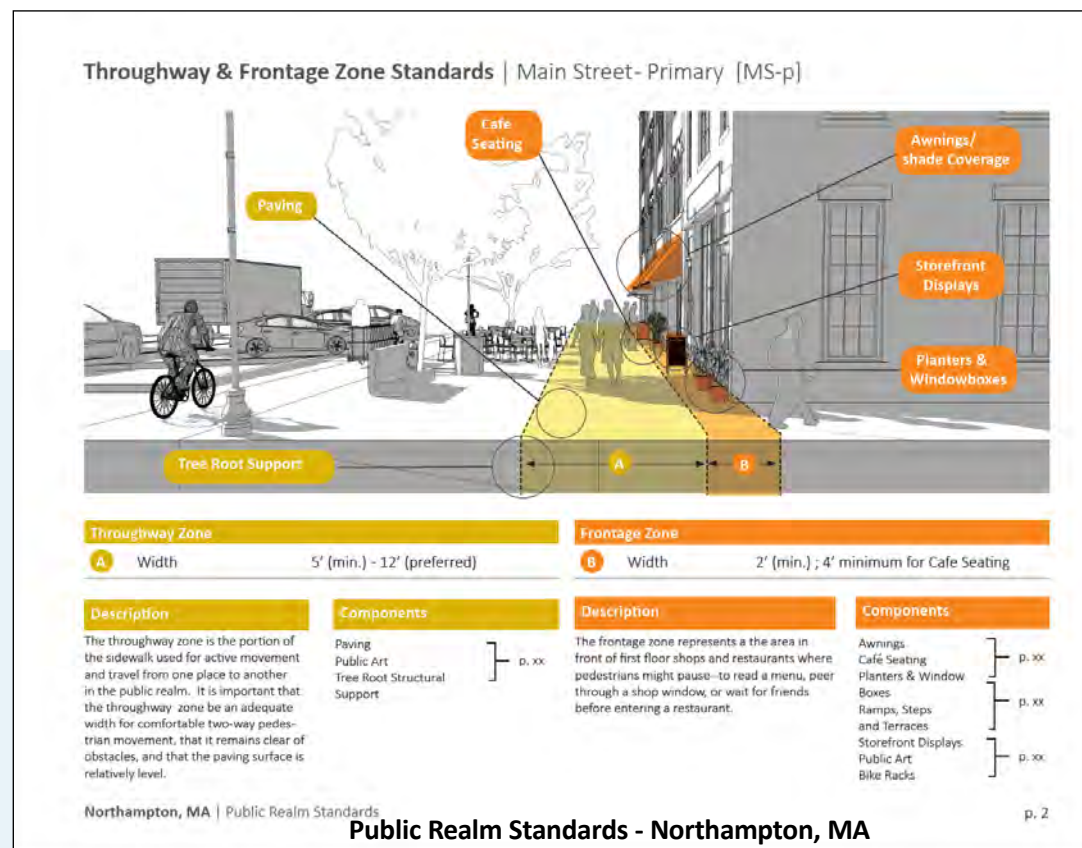


## Public Realm Design Standards and Guidelines.

### Potential Opportunity

- **Streetscape Standards** - focus on sidewalk zones for various treatments and utilization:

- Frontage Zone – Business activation such as awnings, projecting signs, merchandise displays, sidewalk planters, etc.
- Throughway Zone – Clear pedestrian pathway.
- Furnishing & Utility Zone – Furniture, lighting, street trees, bike racks, and other utilities.
- Street Enhancement Zone – On-street parking, curb extensions/crosswalks, bike corrals, parklets.





## Sign regulations definition and clarity.

### Potential Opportunity

- Communities are adopting sign design standards addressing placement, size, lighting and materials with administrative rather than requiring a special permit or board approval.
- Specific standards and illustrative graphics could be adopted for:
  - Wall signs and projecting blade signs
  - Ground signs and Marquee signs
  - Awnings and banner signs
  - Window signs, sandwich board signs, and iconic signs.



## Design Guidelines for programming underutilized spaces.

### Potential Opportunity

- Temporary vacant storefront treatments
- Activate underutilized buildings and lots with outdoor dining, civic events, and business enterprise.



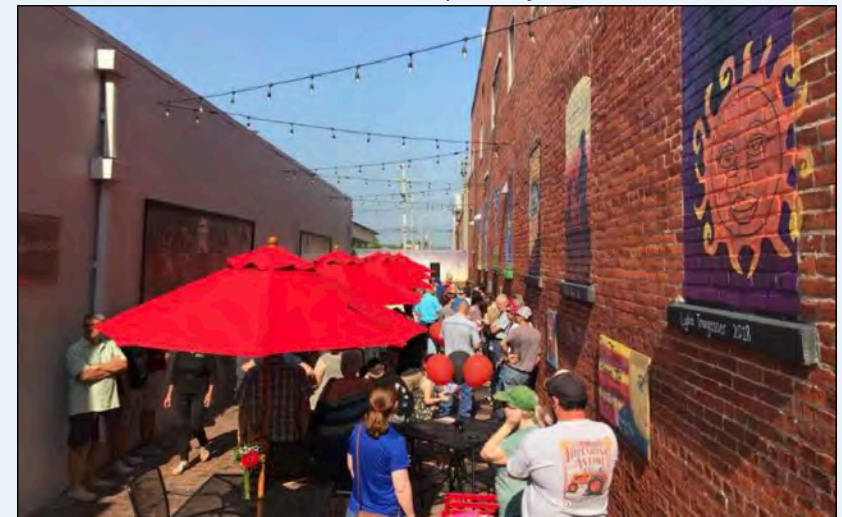
Norwood Shared Street



Arlington Heights  
Temporary Window



8 UP Garage Rooftop Restaurant, Louisville, KY





## Design Guidelines for programming underutilized spaces.

### Potential Opportunity

- Temporary vacant storefront treatments
- Activate underutilized buildings and lots with outdoor dining, civic events, and business enterprise.



Pop Up Stores



Seasonal Art Sheds, Hyannis



Under Utilized On Street Parking



Under Utilized Parking Lots





# Stakeholder Polling Questions



BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENT

# Real Estate Environment

Together the three Districts encompass a little over .5 million s.f. of first floor commercial space under roof. Approximately 9% of first floor units are vacant and 6% of first floor space.

Key Finding

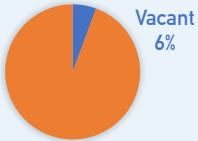
Vacant

Underutilized



Commercial Vacancy - 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Units

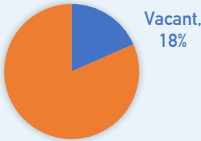
Arlington Heights



Bedford Ctr



E. Lexington Village



All 3 Districts

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial Sq. Ft.	Total # of Commercial Units	Total # of Commercial Units with Frist Floor Presence	Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units
583,122	243	223	19

Arlington Heights

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial Sq. Ft.	Total # of Commercial Units	Total # of Commercial Units with Frist Floor Presence	Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units
283,344	100	100	6

Bedford Center

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial Sq. Ft.	Total # of Commercial Units	Total # of Commercial Units with Frist Floor Presence	Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units
223,444	105	85	6

E. Lexington

Est. Total 1st Floor Commercial Sq. Ft.	Total # of Commercial Units	Total # of Commercial Units with Frist Floor Presence	Total # of 1st Floor Vacant Units
76,334	38	38	7



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The towns could consider implementing additional proactive strategies to address vacancy.

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### Opportunity



#### Vacant Storefronts

\*Arlington already has vacant Storefront Bylaw.

#### *Regulation Example:*

##### Arlington Vacant Storefront By-law

- Registration of vacant space
- Fee to register
- Fee can be waived if activate storefront
- Fine for not Registering

#### *Incentive Example:*

##### Taunton Commercial Rent Subsidy Program

(Program rebates the landlord)

Rent subsidy for 2 yrs. for new businesses



BUSINESS  
ENVIRONMENT

# Business Environment

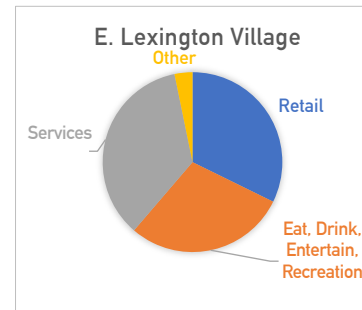
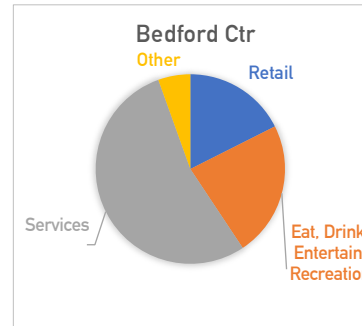
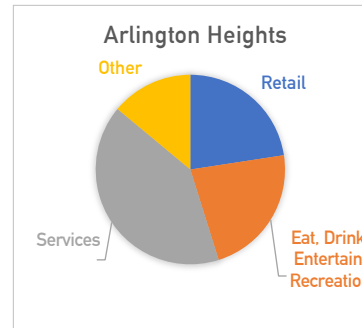
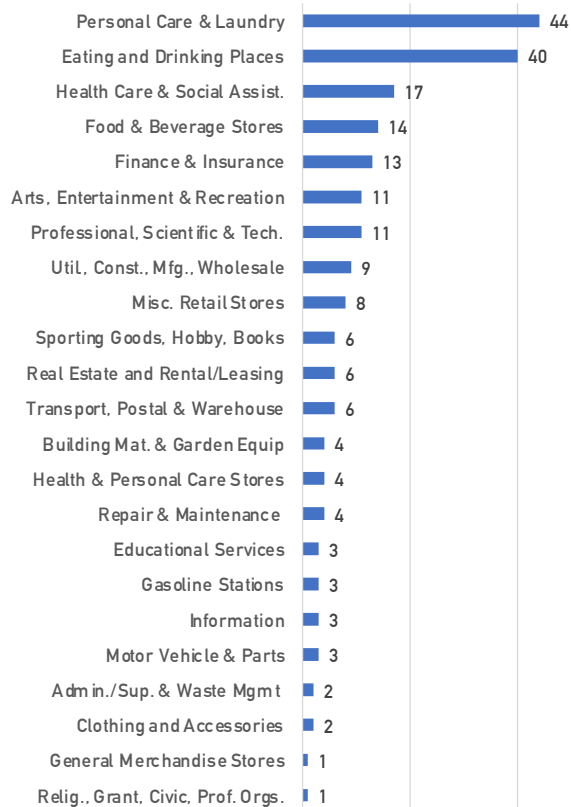
## Business Mix

Total # of  
Establishments

217

Districts are roughly :

- 20 – 30% retail,
- 25 – 30% eating, entertainment, recreation
- 35 – 50% services.



Establishment Type	Arlington Heights	Bedford Ctr	E. Lexington Village
<b>Retail</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>10</b>
Motor Vehicle & Parts	0	1	2
Furniture & Furnishings	0	0	0
Electronics & Appliances	1	1	0
Building Mat. & Garden Equip	4	0	0
Food & Beverage Stores	7	2	5
Health & Personal Care Stores	1	3	0
Gasoline Stations	2	1	0
Clothing and Accessories	1	1	0
Sporting Goods, Hobby, Books	2	3	1
General Merchandise Stores	0	1	0
Misc. Retail Stores	3	3	2
<b>Eating, Drinking &amp; Lodging</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>9</b>
Arts, Entertainment & Recreation	5	6	0
Accommodation	0	0	0
Eating and Drinking Places	16	15	9
<b>Services</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>11</b>
Finance & Insurance	4	9	0
Real Estate and Rental/Leasing	3	2	1
Professional, Scientific & Tech.	5	6	0
Educational Services	2	1	0
Health Care & Social Assist.	6	9	2
Repair & Maintenance	1	2	1
Personal Care & Laundry	17	20	7
Relig., Grant, Civic, Prof. Orgs.	1	0	0
<b>Other</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>1</b>
Agric., Forest, Fishing, Mining	0	0	0
Util., Const., Mfg., Wholesale	8	1	0
Transport, Postal & Warehouse	3	2	1
Information	2	1	0
Admin./Sup. & Waste Mgmt	0	2	0
Public Administration	0	0	0
<b>Total Establishments</b>	<b>94</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>Vacant Commercial Units</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>TOTAL Commercial Units</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>38</b>

Note: The Establishment Type Table shows all business categories that may be present in downtowns/commercial districts. Showing all categories is intended to illustrate those that are represented as well as not represented.



All of the Districts have: 1) at least some “destination/anchor” establishments , 2) a collection of eateries, and 3) a few business clusters.

## Key Finding

### Highlights of the Business Environment: Business Mix – Arlington Heights

#### Destination Retail

- ☐ Trader joes
- ☐ Sports, etc.
- ☐ Penzey's Spices
- ☐ Apothca
- ☐ Walgreens
- ☐ Post Office

#### Sample of Eateries

- ☐ D'Agostino's Deli
- ☐ Yassou
- ☐ Trattoria Nina
- ☐ The Roasted Granola
- ☐ Abbott's Frozen Custard

#### Other Attractions

- ☐ Minuteman Bikeway
- ☐ Old Schwamb Mill

#### Business Clusters\*

- ☐ Eating & Drinking Places
- ☐ Recreation & Fitness
- ☐ Groceries, Liquor, Specialty Food
- ☐ Home Improvement/Maintenance
- ☐ Hair, Nails and Spa Services

\*Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.



### Highlights of the Business Environment: Business Mix – Bedford Center

#### Destination Retail

- ☐ Whole Foods
- ☐ Marshalls
- ☐ Learning Express
- ☐ CVS
- ☐ Post Office

#### Sample of Eateries

- ☐ Red Heat Tavern
- ☐ Posto
- ☐ Ginger Japanese
- ☐ Ken's Pub
- ☐ B. Good
- ☐ Starbucks

#### Other Attractions

- ☐ Minuteman Bikeway
- ☐ Depot Park
- ☐ Bedford Common
- ☐ Veteran's memorial Park
- ☐ Bedford Historical Museum (closed until new location)

#### Business Clusters\*

- ☐ Eating & Drinking Places
- ☐ Groceries & Liquor
- ☐ Recreation & Fitness
- ☐ Hair, Nails and Spa Services

\*Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.



### Highlights of the Business Environment: Business Mix – E. Lexington Village

#### Destination Retail

- ☐ Wilson Farm
- ☐ Berman's Liquor

#### Sample of Eateries

- ☐ Taipei Gourmet
- ☐ Nick's Place
- ☐ Dunkin Donuts
- ☐ Ixtapa Mexican Grill
- ☐ Wicked Bagel
- ☐ Great Harvest Bread Company

#### Other Attractions

- ☐ Minuteman Bikeway
- ☐ Wilson Farm
- ☐ Bow Street Park

#### Business Clusters\*

- ☐ Eating & Drinking Places
- ☐ Convenience & Liquor
- ☐ Auto Sales, Parts & Service

\*Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.



There is not much in the way of entertainment and very limited cultural events. (Although there are a few recreation uses e.g., fitness centers).

## Key Finding

**Opportunity:** Encourage more entertainment uses and cultural events in the Business Districts.

“Retailtainment” may be more important than ever as we try to bring customers back to Business Districts after COVID.

### Highlights of the Business Environment: Business Mix – Arlington Heights

#### Destination Retail

- ☐ Trader Joes
- ☐ Sports, etc.
- ☐ Penzey's Spices
- ☐ Apothca
- ☐ Walgreens
- ☐ Post Office

#### Sample of Eateries

- ☐ D'Agostino's Deli
- ☐ Yassou
- ☐ Trattoria Nina
- ☐ The Roasted Granola
- ☐ Abbott's Frozen Custard

#### Other Attractions

- ☐ Minuteman Bikeway
- ☐ Old Schwamb Mill

#### Business Clusters\*

- ☐ Eating & Drinking Places
- ☐ Recreation & Fitness
- ☐ Groceries, Liquor, Specialty Food
- ☐ Home Improvement/Maintenance
- ☐ Hair, Nails and Spa Services

\*Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.

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#### Destination Retail

- ☐ Whole Foods
- ☐ Marshalls
- ☐ Learning Express
- ☐ CVS
- ☐ Post Office

#### Sample of Eateries

- ☐ Red Heat Tavern
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- ☐ Starbucks

#### Other Attractions

- ☐ Minuteman Bikeway
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- ☐ Recreation & Fitness
- ☐ Hair, Nails and Spa Services

\*Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.

### Highlights of the Business Environment: Business Mix – E. Lexington Village

#### Destination Retail

- ☐ Wilson Farm
- ☐ Berman's Liquor

#### Sample of Eateries

- ☐ Taipei Gourmet
- ☐ Nick's Place
- ☐ Dunkin Donuts
- ☐ Ixtapa Mexican Grill
- ☐ Wicked Bagel
- ☐ Great Harvest Bread Company

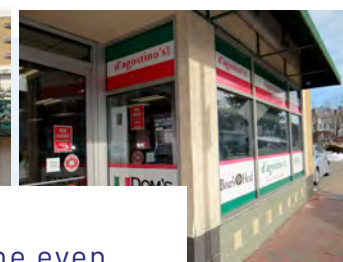
#### Other Attractions

- ☐ Minuteman Bikeway
- ☐ Wilson Farm
- ☐ Bow Street Park

#### Business Clusters\*

- ☐ Eating & Drinking Places
- ☐ Convenience & Liquor
- ☐ Auto Sales, Parts & Service

\*Clusters are groupings of businesses that offer crossover & comparative consumer opportunities.



- During COVID, customers have become even more comfortable with online shopping and it will take more to get them back into shopping areas than simply the ability to acquire goods.
- Even before COVID, millennials had demonstrated a clear preference for experience-related spending and, "retailtainment" was a growing trend.

Although COVID impacts were widespread, the businesses in the three Districts appear to have fared just slightly better than other RRP Districts.

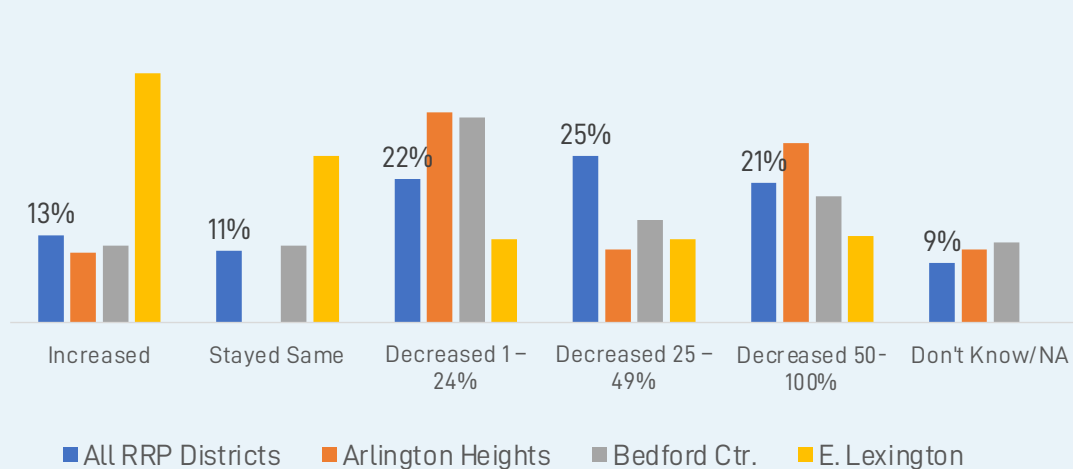
#### Key Finding

**89-100% of businesses reported negative impacts from COVID-19.**

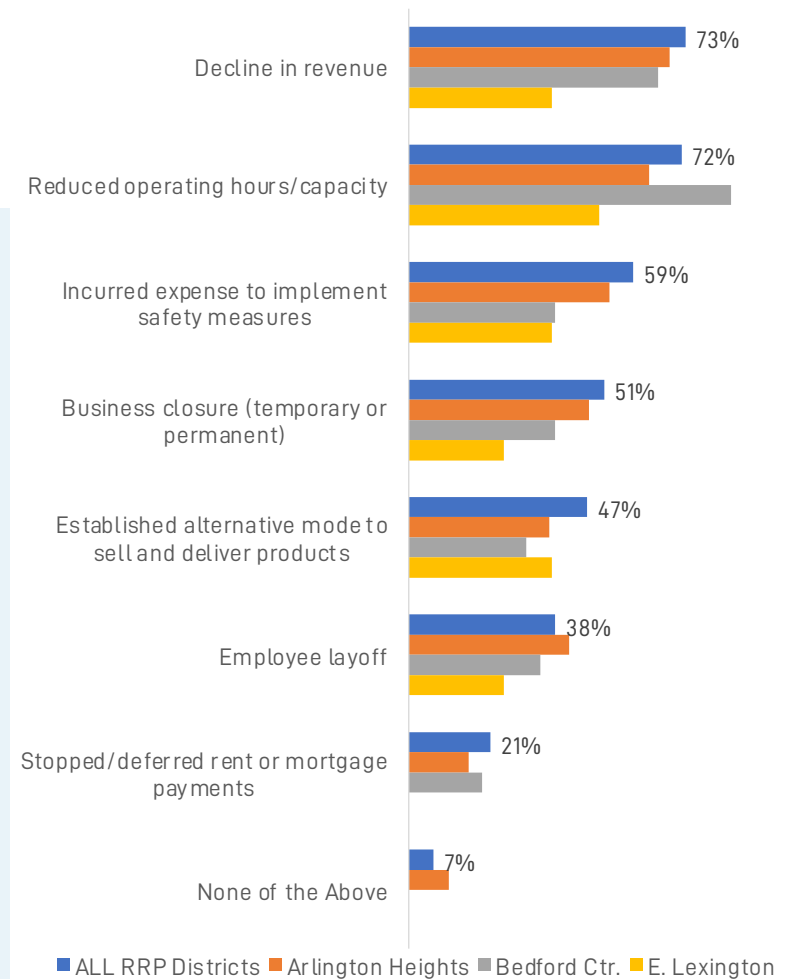
Majority: revenue decline, reduced operating & unplanned expenses

Loss of Revenue 68% of businesses in the three Districts suffered a year-over-year revenue loss (68% all RRP)

**Business Revenue 2020 vs. 2019**



**COVID Impacts**  
(% of Business Respondents)





Although COVID impacts were widespread, the businesses in the three Districts appear to have fared just slightly better than other RRP Districts.

#### Key Finding

All of three Districts were impacted by **Decline in Foot Traffic.**

- 69% indicated reduction in foot traffic in Jan/Feb compared previous year.
- For 50% of businesses, on-site customer traffic was down by 25% or more.
- **On a positive note,** 42% of businesses said they established an alternative mode to sell or deliver.



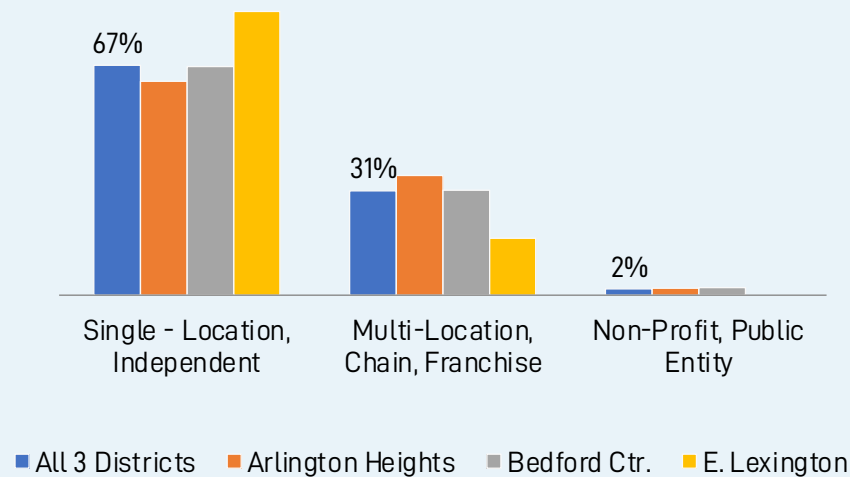
## Business Characteristics

Most of the establishments (67%) are independently owned, single-location businesses.

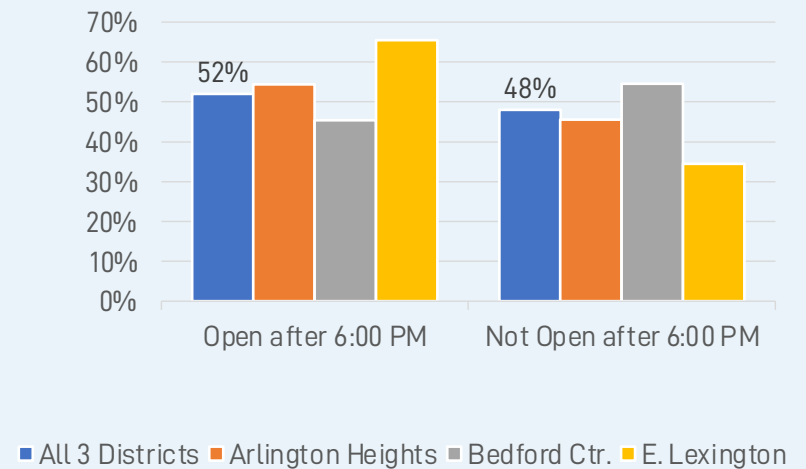
Key Finding

Business activity declines sharply in the evening.

Ownership



Operating Hours



## What Business Owners Had to Say. . . Satisfaction with Business District.

### Key Finding

#### Satisfaction with Business District

When asked about satisfaction with various elements of their Business Districts, the majority of businesses were neutral or satisfied. The most negative responses are highlighted below.

##### Arlington Heights

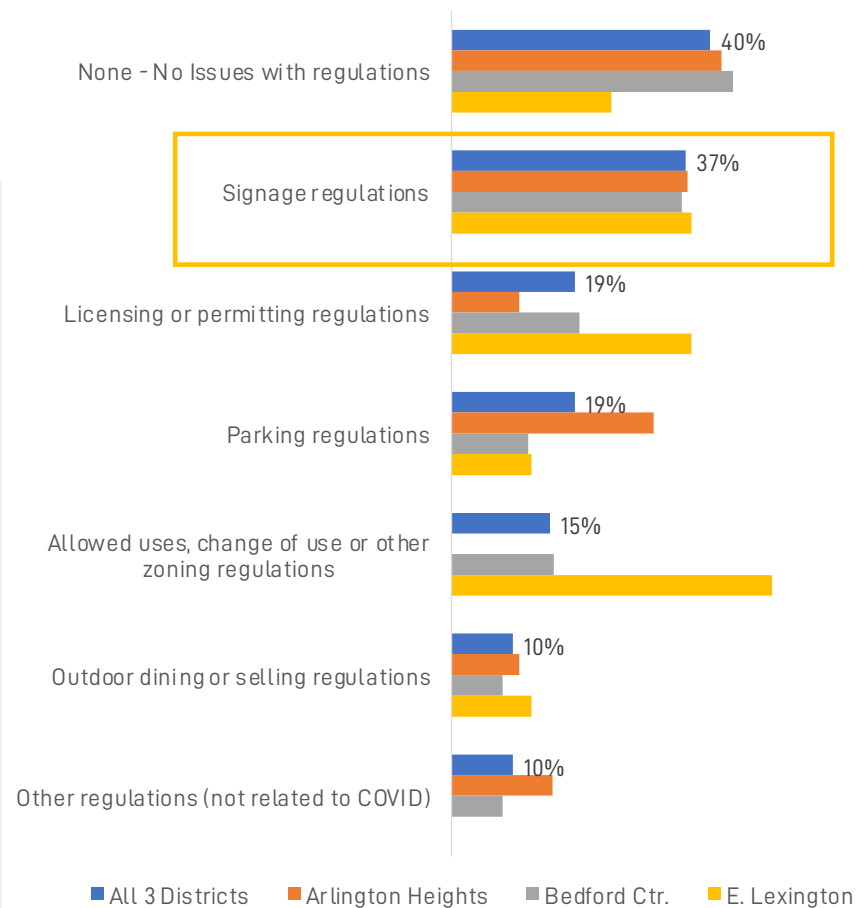
32% were "Dissatisfied" or Very Dissatisfied" with **Condition of Private Buildings, Facades and Storefronts**

##### E. Lexington

38% were "Dissatisfied" or Very Dissatisfied" with **Condition of Public Spaces, Streets and Sidewalks**

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#### Regulations that Pose an Obstacle (Results from Business Survey)





## What Business Owners Had to Say. . . Important Strategies

### Key Finding

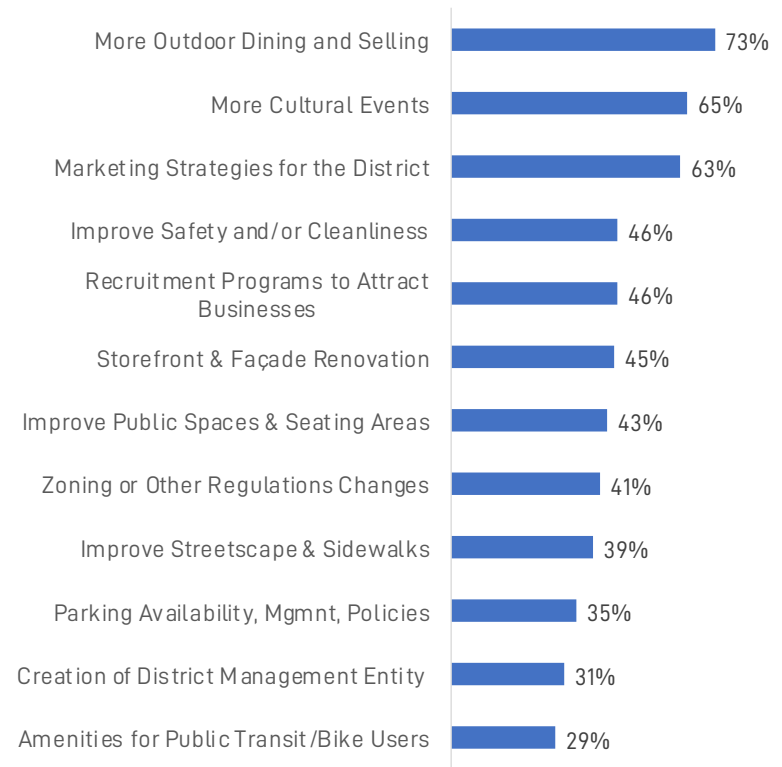
#### Most Important Strategies

1. More Outdoor Dining & Selling Opportunities,
2. More Cultural Events, and
3. Marketing Strategies for the District.

#### Interest in receiving Assistance

- Most frequently selected - Shared Marketing/Advertising. (35%)

#### Strategies Rated as "Important" or "Very Important" by Businesses





CUSTOMER  
BASE

# Market Environment: Customer Base and Marketing the District

The three Business Districts have the opportunity to attract resident and non-resident market segments.

---

Key Finding

### Potential Customers for the Three Districts

#### Resident Market Segment

- ✓ People Living in the Surrounding Area
  - largest opportunity

#### Non-resident Market Segments

- ✓ Minuteman Bikeway Users
  - commuters and recreational users
  - **appears to be largely untapped despite close proximity**
- ✓ Employees who Work in the Community
- ✓ Visitors Coming to Attractions or Events

#### Residents benefit when businesses attract non-resident customers

- Makes it feasible to have a larger variety of shops, restaurants and entertainment that wouldn't be supported by only resident customers alone.



## Resident Market Segment

2021 Estimates	Town Population	Residents w/i 5 – Minute Drive Time (TA5)	Residents w/i10 – Minute Drive Time (TA10)
Arlington Heights	45,277	28,019	108,457
Bedford Center	14,646	6,219	29,542
E. Lexington Village	33,388	15,893	79,322

### Highlights . . .

Residents are **well educated and affluent**.

- Arlington - 1.4 times State
- Bedford- 1.7 times State
- Lexington - 2.3 times State

Over 70% have Bachelor Degrees.

- **Residents are older** than state average
- **More likely to have children** in HH - **Lexington and Bedford**
- **Less likely to have children** in HH -Arlington
- High percentage (>90%) of households **have access to private vehicles** fo acquiring goods & services.
- Higher than average percentage of **Asian residents**.

2021 Estimates	Town of Arlington	Town of Bedford	Town of Lexington	MA
<b>Income, Education &amp; Age</b>				
Median Household Income	\$121,601	\$145,172	\$187,036	\$86,645
Par Capita Income	\$76,712	\$83,062	\$93,954	\$48,708
Residents ≥25 with Bachelor's Degree+	73%	72%	83%	44%
Median Age	43.1	45.2	46.7	40.5
<b>Households</b>				
Average Household Size	2.2	2.5	2.7	2.5
Households with Children <18	28%	34%	39%	31%
Home Ownership	61%	71%	79%	62%
Household Vehicle Ownership	90%	96%	96%	89%
Avg. Vehicles per Household	1.5	1.9	1.9	1.6
<b>Race &amp; Ethnicity</b>				
White Alone	79%	78%	63%	75%
Black/African American Alone	3%	3%	2%	8%
Asian Alone	13%	15%	31%	7%
Other Race Alone/More than 1 Race	5%	4%	5%	9%
Hispanic	5%	4%	3%	13%

Sales leakage (pertaining to the resident market segment) may point to opportunities for businesses.

Key Finding

TA5 = residents within 5 – Minute Drive Time  
TA10 = residents within 10 – Minute Drive Time

Arlington Heights



Bedford Center



E. Lexington Village



Town residents spend at least  
**\$65.7 million**  
outside each year  
at eating & drinking places

TA5 residents spend at least  
**\$48.2 million**  
outside each year  
at eating & drinking places



Town residents spend at least  
**\$3.4 million**  
outside each year  
at eating & drinking places

TA10 residents spend at least  
**\$36.4 million**  
outside each year  
at eating & drinking places



Town residents spend at least  
**\$64.8 million**  
outside each year  
at eating & drinking places

TA5 residents spend at least  
**\$20.8 million**  
outside each year  
at eating & drinking places

## Market Segment: Minuteman Bikeway Users

### Untapped Market Opportunity

**Approximately 3,000 Daily Users**  
(Arlington Center)

*One-Hour Bikeway Count*  
(Spring Saturday)

In Arlington Heights,

- **301 Bikeway users**
- **13 (4%) got off the trail at Park Ave**

In Bedford, there were

- **216 Bikeway users**
- **22 users entered the Narrow Gauge Trail** (not all from Minuteman Bikeway)

In E. Lexington Village

- **309 Bikeway users**
- **16 (5%) got off the trail at Bow Street**



### Minuteman Bikeway Users: One Hour Count



Location	Bikers – Casual and Hardcore	Kid Bikers/Riders	Joggers	Walkers	Strollers	Skaters/Boarders
<b>Arlington Park Ave</b>	231	16	10	34	5	5
<b>Total</b>	301					
<b>Exiting</b>	13					
<b>Bedford Railroad Ave</b>	188	11	2	15	0	4
<b>Total</b>	216					
<b>Entering Narrow Gauge</b>	22					
<b>E. Lexington Bow Street</b>	239	21	8	32	3	6
<b>Total</b>	309					
<b>Exiting</b>	16					



# Market Segments: Employees and Visitors

## Employees

All three communities have a significant number of employees that add to the potential market opportunity.

Bedford has more employees than it has residents so clearly this is a very important market segment.

Community	Number of Employees
Arlington	10,012
Bedford	19,132
Lexington	23,615

## Visitors

Currently, there are a few events and attractions that might generate minor visitor traffic.

Attractions
<b>Arlington Heights</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Minuteman Bikeway</li><li>Old Scwamb Mill</li></ul>
<b>Bedford Center</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Minuteman Bikeway</li><li>Depot Park</li><li>Bedford Common</li><li>Veteran’s Memorial Park</li><li>Bedford Historical Museum (closed until new location)</li></ul>
<b>E. Lexington</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Minuteman Bikeway</li><li>Wilson Farm</li><li>Bow Street Park</li></ul>

Example of Events

District	Event	Where	When	Notes
Arlington Heights	Oktoberfest and Beer Garden	Old Schwamb Mill	October	2018 and 2019
E. Lexington	Berman's E. Lexington Block Party	Berman Liquor Parking Lot	September	Annual, vendors, sampling, etc.
E. Lexington	Various Wilson Far events (e.g., Dinner in the Field, Goat Yoga, Grilled Cheese Fest)	Wilson Farm	Various	
E. Lexington	Indoor Farmers Market	Waldorf School (just outside the District)	Biweekly Saturdays during Winter	



CUSTOMER  
BASE

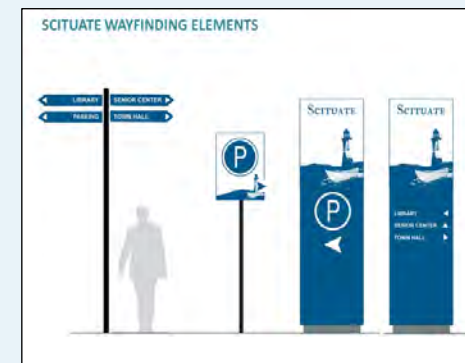


# Market Environment: Customer Base and Marketing the District

## Marketing of the Districts is limited.

### Key Finding

- **District Branding is Uncoordinated** - Typical elements of a branding program are logos, taglines specifically designed for a given district and distributed through gateway and wayfinding systems, street banners, websites, window signs, publications, and other mediums.
- **Lack of Information on Businesses** - Information about the number and types of businesses. Lack of business directories
- **Physical and Visual Limitations from the Bikeway** - From the trail access and orientation to adjacent districts and businesses it is often unclear.
- **Lack of Wayfinding Signage especially on the Bikeway** - Information about districts, points of interest, interpretive signs is limited.





There is much room to improve District marketing and branding to help attract customers and, in particular, attract Bikeway users to the Business Districts

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#### Key Finding

**The Bikeway is so close.  
How can we attract more Bikeway  
users to the Business Districts?**

#### Suggested Strategy . . .

1. Help them find the Districts and know what's available.
2. Make them comfortable.
3. Let them know they are welcome & wanted.
4. Give them a reason to come and come back

Results of focus group research with trail and bike-related organization, discussions with project leaders and case study research.



## Attracting Bikeway users . . .

### 1. Help them find the Districts and what's available

#### Improved Wayfinding/Signage

- Signage to show where commercial areas are located, directions from bikeway entry points
- Let bikers know what is coming up
- Better wayfinding at end of Bikeway to direct users to Narrow Gauge Trail and Bedford Center (inform users not the end!)
- Paint the ground with symbols/dotted lines (e.g. Freedom Trail) to lead users to certain sites
- Wayfinding signs at Gold's Gym and Trader Joes (private property but might be amenable)
- Coordination between the 3 towns – regarding signage
- Create, formalize public “at-grade” entry at Park Ave



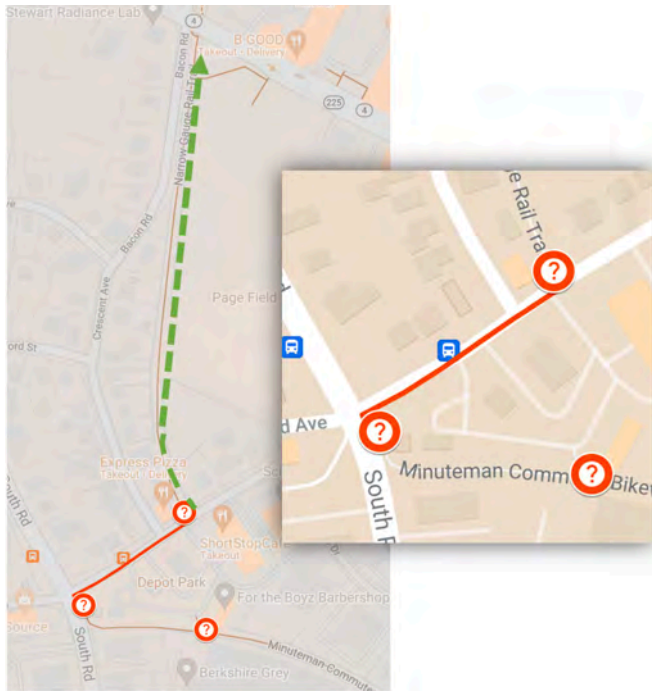
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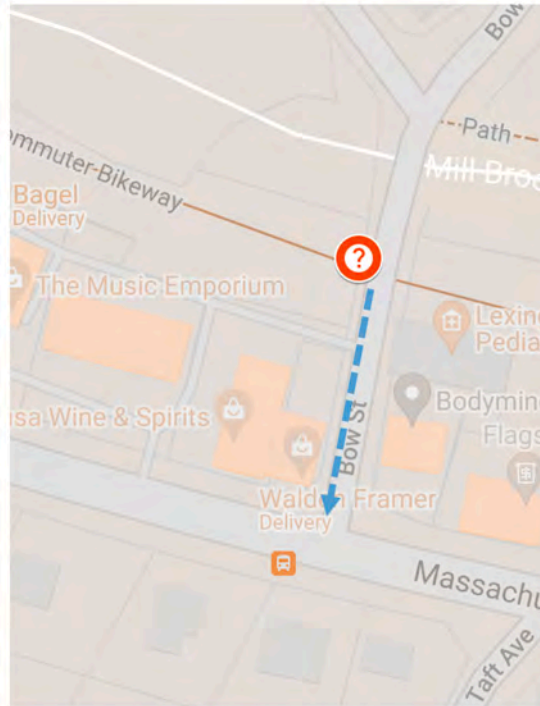
#### Business District Marketing

- Digital marketing – provide information available through smartphones
- Physical marketing materials - map, pamphlet, etc.
- Business directory/mall map to show people what is offered in the Districts
- Coordinate with other committees & organizations in the community to garner support for marketing efforts (e.g., Greenway Corridor Committee)

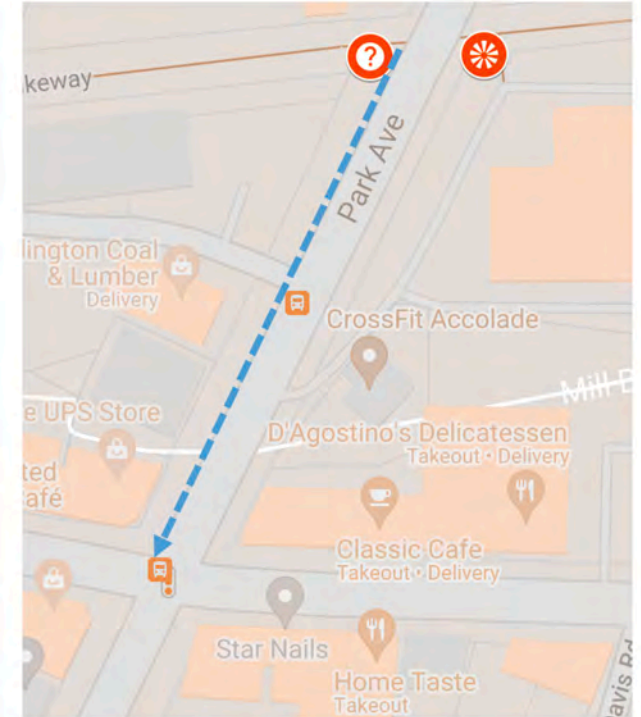




Bedford - Depot Park Area



E. Lexington - Bow Street Park Area



Arlington Heights - Park Ave Area

## Suggested Wayfinding Locations to Direct Users from Bikeway

	Suggested Wayfinding Information Sites
	Route to District Core Via Road
	Route to District Core via Narrow Gauge Trail

## Entry Issue – Arlington Heights

	Only "At-Grade" Entry Close to District Core
	Private property? Could formal public entry be created?



## Attracting Bikeway users . . .

### 2. Make them comfortable.

#### Amenities

- Bike racks
- Picnic tables and benches at Bow Street Park (several eateries nearby)
- Picnic tables at Veterans Memorial Park (several eateries at Marketplace)
- Availability of restrooms (open at Depot Park, access at businesses, public facilities)
- Water fountains

**Improve Physical Environment as needed**  
(See Physical Environment Section)



Attracting Bikeway users . . .

### 3. Let them know they're welcome & wanted.

#### BFBD Program – Bike & Pedestrian Friendly Business District

- Implemented in communities outside of MA
- Encourage local dining & shopping on foot/bike
- Businesses agree to offer accommodations/amenities/incentives & encourage employees & customers to bike
- Public amenities & infrastructure
- District branding & marketing as BFBD
- Complementary events



#### Opportunity:

A BFBD Program could be piloted for the 3 Districts and encompass several of the initiatives discussed.

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## Attracting Bikeway users . . .

### Encourage businesses to fix up the (Bikeway-facing) rear of their buildings

- Bikeway users have no visual clues that businesses are located in such close proximity
- Attractive facade treatments and opening rear entrances could indicate vibrancy, signal something interesting is nearby – maybe you should stop.

### Promote public art at the entry points and other areas near the commercial districts

- Public art may be allowed where signage isn't .



Opportunity:  
Consider creating "store back" improvement program

- design assistance
- special financing.





Attracting Bikeway users . . .

#### 4. Give them a reason to come and come back.

### Programming/Events

**Rejuvenate Farmers Market at Depot Park**

**Hosting events at Bow Street park**

**Create Bike-way User Related Events**

- Patriots Day event
- Commuter Breakfast
- Yoga at Bow Street Park
- Ciclavia-style events (car-free streets)
- Coordinate with local bike shops

**Develop Bike- BD Promotion Events**

- Scavenger/treasure hunt, Poker rides

### Promote Complementary Uses/Development

- Reuse VFW building at Depot Park for Bikeway-compatible use; consider creating a master plan for DP area



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## It's important to get people in the habit of coming to the Business Districts post COVID.

---

### Key Finding

- People have changed their behavior in the last year
- As vaccination rate rises, a window opens to shape new routines and traditions.
- Important to get customers to come back and keep them coming back again and again.

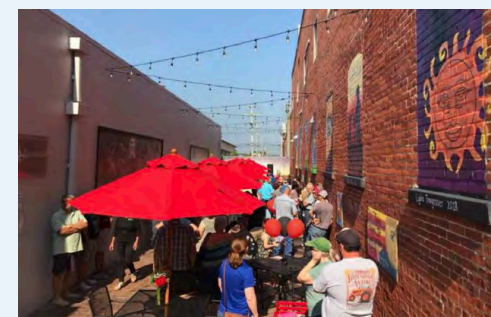
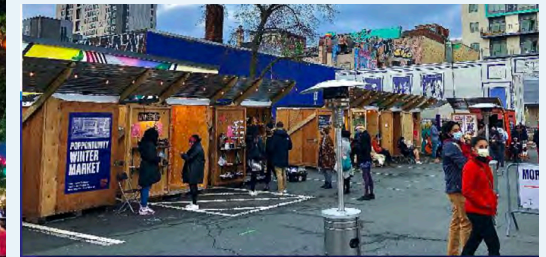
It's important to get people in the habit of coming Downtown post COVID.

### Key Finding

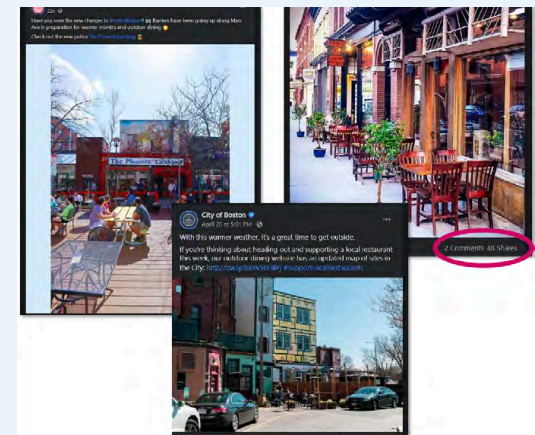


### Strategies

1. **Streamline approval process** to use public and private outdoor space for dining and selling.
2. **Support/expand existing attractions and develop new complementary attractions.**
3. **Create fun and inviting places.** Activate underutilized spaces.
4. **Develop programming – Events.**
5. **Beef up your marketing efforts. Promote Business District and what's new.** – social media campaign
6. **Make it easy to walk and bike to the Business District.**



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ADMIN  
CAPACITY

# District Management

There is no organization currently managing and overseeing recovery efforts in the Business Districts.

#### Key Finding

- Each of the three communities has an Economic Development Coordinator/Director or Economic Development Department and there are several citizen organizations that play a role in some aspect of the Business Districts.
- However, **there is no entity currently managing the Business Districts and overseeing implementation of recovery efforts.**
- **There is no dedicated dependable funding source to pay for Business District promotion, cultural activities or general management staffing.**

#### Organization Involved with Business Districts

##### Arlington Heights

Arlington Chamber of Commerce

Arlington Bicycle Advisory Committee

##### Bedford Center

Bedford Chamber of Commerce

Friends of the Minuteman Bikeway

Bedford Bicycle Advisory Committee

Trails Committee

##### E. Lexington Village

Lexington Chamber of Commerce

East Lexington Community Association

Lexington Bicycle Advisory Committee

Greenways Corridor Committee

There is no organization currently managing and overseeing recovery efforts in the Business Districts.

Key Finding

Opportunity

Management Entity	District Delineation	Revenue Sources
Volunteer Downtown Organization	Volunteer program model addressing design, organization, promotion and economic vitality.	Not self-sustaining; state grants, municipal contributions and fundraising
Community Development Corporation	Engages residents and businesses to undertake sustainable community development efforts. Geared to benefit low/moderate income.	Not self-sustaining; state grants, foundations and donations
Business Improvement District	Contiguous area with in which property owners paid to develop, fund and execute supplemental services to benefit economic and social vitality of district.	Self-sustaining through fees; reauthorized every five years, grants and fundraising
Parking Benefit Districts	Geographically defined district in which parking revenues are dedicated to related improvements. Can be a standalone or part of an existing downtown organization.	Self-sustaining through parking revenue fees

Opportunity: Consider formalizing a management structure/designating an entity to manage the Business Districts and implement the RRP recommendations.





# Stakeholder Polling Questions

## Ideas Developed During the RRP Process – What do you like? Anything to Add?

### 1. Marketing the Business Districts to Residents, Bikeway Users & Others

- a. Create BFBD Program (Bike & Pedestrian-Friendly Business District)
- b. Additional cultural events/programming incl. Bikeway User-related
- c. Business District promotional events aimed at Bikeway users
- d. Wayfinding system (Bikeway users, welcome, directional)
- e. Business Directory/Community Info Kiosks
- f. Branding Program (logos, taglines with wayfinding)
- g. Increase social media/digital and physical marketing materials
- h. Improve business orientation to Bikeway (direct access, spur trails, storeback improvement program, outdoor seating, etc.)

### 2. Business Mix, Recruitment, Vacancy Reduction, Redevelopment

- a. Facilitate additional outdoor dining & selling opportunities
- b. Encourage more entertainment uses & attractions in the Districts
- c. Support strategic redevelopment, adaptive reuse, and mixed use
- d. Consider additional proactive programs to address vacancies

### 3. Physical Environment - Public Realm and Access

- a. Identify opportunities to create a social gathering/event space in AH (MBTA Bus Property, under-utilized private/public property)
- b. Activate existing public spaces with additional amenities in BC & EL (e.g., tables in Bow Street Park and Veterans Memorial Park Area)
- c. Promote reuse/develop guidelines for VFW building to encourage Bikeway-compatible use (BC); consider master plan for Depot Park
- d. Create/formalize public "at-grade" Bikeway entry at Park Ave (AH) (e.g., Gold's Gym Parking Lot)

- e. Increase bike and pedestrian amenities in the Districts
- f. Increase Public Art (murals, sculpture, historic signage, etc.)
- g. Add ornamental tree lighting for night time ambience
- h. Additional streetscape elements (perhaps partner with technical school to fabricate furnishings and wayfinding elements)

### 4. Physical Environment - Private Realm

- a. More variety of quality signage and lighting (e.g., wall signs, blade signs, window signs, sandwich board signs, etc.)
- b. More outdoor merchandise display, sidewalk planters, quality window display, etc.
- c. Storefront Improvement Program (façade, windows, signs, awnings.) and Store back Improvement Program for Bikeway abutters, AH & EL

### 5. Public and Private Realm

- a. AH 100% Corner Demonstration Project- multiple improvements, remove existing circular planters

### 6. Administrative Capacity

- a. Review & revise signage regulations, clarify sign-by-law regulations, encourage variety of signs by right with design standards
- b. Implement Context-Based Zoning
- c. Review/streamline approval process for use of public & private outdoor space for dining and selling as needed
- d. Public Realm Design Guidelines
- e. Improve District/Bikeway management/advocacy – designated entity to implement Recovery Plan and programs



# Stakeholder Polling Questions



## What happens in the next week?

1. Slides and recording will be posted on Community Websites
2. Feel free to submit feedback/comment by June 18<sup>th</sup> to your Community Project Leader

Arlington Heights – Ali Carter,  
[acarter@town.arlington.ma.us](mailto:acarter@town.arlington.ma.us)

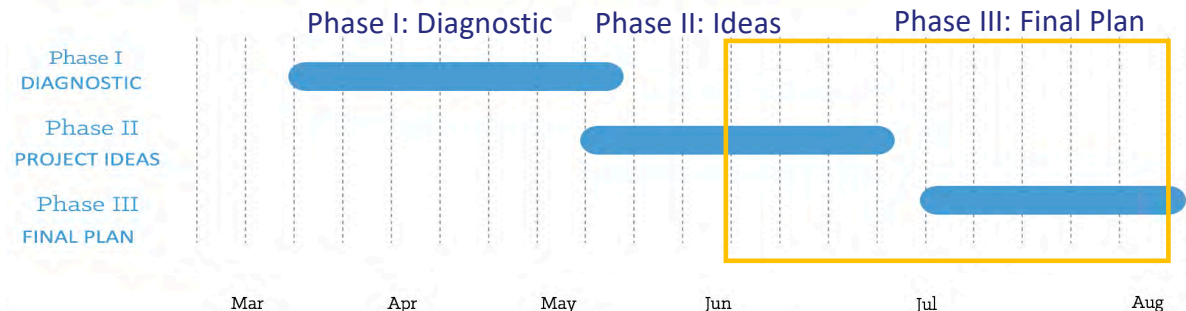
East Lexington Village - Sandhya Iyer,  
[siyer@lexingtonma.gov](mailto:siyer@lexingtonma.gov)

Bedford Center Alyssa Sandoval,  
[asandoval@bedfordma.gov](mailto:asandoval@bedfordma.gov)

## What happens in next couple of months ?

1. Review the community input received
2. Refine ideas and narrow down to a set of potential actionable recommendations
3. Create a Draft Plan (recommendations)
4. Gather Community feedback on Draft Plan
5. Finalize plan for submission to Commonwealth

## Rapid Recovery Plan (RRP) Program





# Thank You!